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ORIGIN WHA-00

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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TAGS: OPRC, KPAO

SUBJECT: WHA GUIDANCE, APRIL 17, 2002

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:

WHA PRESS GUIDANCE, APRIL 17 (VENEZUELA)

END SUMMARY.

WHA PRESS GUIDANCE, APRIL 17, 2002

-- VENEZUELA: REICH CALL TO PEDRO CARMONA --

QUESTION: DID ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE REICH SPEAK WITH VENEZUELA'S THEN INTERIM PRESIDENT ON FRIDAY APRIL 12 TO ADVISE HIM TO NOT DISSOLVE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY?

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A: CONTRARY TO A REPORT IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, ASSISTANT SECRETARY REICH DID NOT SPEAK WITH THEN-INTERIM PRESIDENT PEDRO CARMONA ON FRIDAY APRIL 12 OR AT ANY OTHER TIME DURING VENEZUELA'S CRISIS LAST WEEK.

THROUGH OUR EMBASSY IN CARACAS, AMBASSADOR REICH DID CONVEY THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT THAT THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT WOULD RESPECT THE INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES OF DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA, INCLUDING THE CONTINUED FUNCTIONING OF ALL BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT.

IF PRESSED: OVER THE COURSE OF FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, AMBASSADOR SHAPIRO SPOKE WITH A NUMBER OF VENEZUELANS INVOLVED IN THE EVENTS THERE, INCLUDING THEN INTERIM PRESIDENT CARMONA.

THE ASSERTION THAT THE UNITED STATES SOUGHT TO "STAGE MANAGE" THE SITUATION IN VENEZUELA, IS FLATLY INCORRECT. OUR DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS, LIKE THOSE OF OUR DEMOCRATIC ALLIES, WERE FOCUSED ON HELPING VENEZUELANS RESOLVE THEIR CRISIS PEACEFULLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY.

THROUGH REGULAR DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS BOTH IN WASHINGTON AND IN CARACAS, WE MADE CLEAR OUR REJECTION OF ANY UNCONSTITUTIONAL, UNDEMOCRATIC EFFORT BY ANY PARTY IN VENEZUELA.

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